FACTORS INFLUENCING ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT
IN LOWER-CLASS NEGRO CHILDREN

by

BARBARA ANN RUDNICKI

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Herbert E. Kaiser

Major Professor

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ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The great influx of Negroes from the South and rural areas into the major cities, during the recent decades, has resulted in the establishment and expansion of ghettoes in the core area of these cities. Due to the differences in their race, background and value system they have not been easily assimilated into the dominant white culture. Their race has had an isolating effect in that social interaction tends to be warped and confined. "The Negro has been assigned a separate social category where he is unable to participate in social interaction to the same extent as the white man."[1]

In order that the big cities fulfill their previous role of integrating newcomers into the broader culture and of stimulating upward mobility among the present in-migrants, ". . . the schools must be viewed as one, if not the central agency, through which these goals can be achieved."[2] Unfortunately, the Negro student's past experiences have not adequately prepared him to effectively compete in a school system designed to promote the progress of the average, white, middle-class

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[1]Clemmont E. Vontress, "Cultural Differences: Implications For Counseling," Journal of Negro Education, XXXVIII (Summer, 1969), p. 267.

[2]Harry A. Passow, Miriam Goldberg, and Abraham J. Tannenbaum, (eds.) The Educationally Retarded and Disadvantaged, Sixty-sixth Yearbook of The National Society for The Study Of Education, Part I, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 33.

student. Therefore, the Negro student from a lower-socioeconomic background frequently encounters failure, which in turn, affects subsequent levels of aspiration and academic achievement. Experiences such as this tend to isolate and alienate the Negro student from the benefits of the educational system.

The disharmony between the social environment of the lower-class Negro home and the middle-class oriented demands of the school is reflected by the relative lack of academic success and the high dropout rates in the core area schools. If the school is to function as a means of facilitating integration and upward mobility, it is mandatory that the personnel be cognizant of the various factors influencing their students' perceptions of them and the school environment, as well as, their perceptions of the students.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

During the recent decades, there has been an increasing concern over the poor academic achievement of the Negro student in the core area schools. A contemporary view of the nature of intelligence suggests that environmental deprivation, rather than inherently limited potential, is a prime factor in determining scholastic achievement. Since external factors exert a significant influence on the student, it is important to ascertain their affect on the student in the school situation.

There were two purposes for this report: (1) to determine the extent to which factors in the home and school environment function to mold the lower-class Negro student's level of aspiration and subsequent

level of achievement; and, (2) to employ these implications in formulating suggestions for an improved understanding by school personnel of the Negro student that would enhance his opportunity for encountering success in the school setting.

Procedures Involved

This report was designed as a problem in library research. In order to obtain relevant source material the major journals in the fields of education and educational research, in addition to psychological and dissertation abstracts, were consulted. The articles employed as reference material were generally published within the last ten year period, 1959-1969.

Definition of Terms

Level of aspiration. The level of aspiration is a term designating the reciprocal relationship between the goals which an individual sets for himself and his experiences with success and failure. In general, successes tend to maintain or heighten the level of aspiration, while failures tend to lower the level of aspiration.[3]

Achievement. Achievement is indicated by the proficiency of a performance and is generally measured by a standardized task or test. It implies a demonstration of acquired ability rather than inherent capacity.[4]

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[3]Phillip Harriman, Dictionary of Psychology (New York: The Philosophical Library, Inc., 1947), p. 34.

[4]Howard Warren (ed.), Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 3.

Lower-class social status. Social class is initially defined
by Kohn as an aggregate of individuals who occupy broadly similar
positions on a prestige scale.[5] The lower-class is composed basically
of unskilled laborers whose employment is irregular and often marginal,
as differentiated from the working class which is composed of semi-
skilled and skilled workers whose employment is more stable.[6]

Values. Values are "the shared cultural standards according to
which the relevance-moral, aesthetic, or cognitive-of the objects of
attitudes, desires, and needs can be compared and judged."[7]

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[5]Melvin Kohn, "Social Class and Parent Child Relationships: An
Interpretation," Mental Health of the Poor, ed. Frank Riessman, (London:
The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), p. 160.

[6]Ibid., p. 114.

[7]B. N. Sugarman, "Social Class and Values As Related To
Achievement And Conduct in The Schools," Sociological Review, 14, Nov.,
1966, p. 288.

Chapter 2

FACTORS IN THE HOME AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT THAT INFLUENCE

THE FORMATION OF ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

There are numerous antecedent factors that mold the Negro child's

level of aspiration, and in turn, either positively or negatively

influence achievement in the school situation. Crandall stated that

cultural and social factors, parental influence and school experiences

are most significant in their ultimate effect on the child's antici-

pations, expectations, and standards with respect to his achievement

propensities in his academic situation.[1] Therefore, aspiration and

academic achievement are interdependent in that both the home and school

setting exert influences on the child that interact with one another and

cause the child to view himself in terms of his past and present

experiences.

FACTORS IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Social Milieu

In the core area of urban ghettoes a substantial number of

children suffer from a family environment that inhibits their mental

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[1]Vaughn J. Crandall, "Achievement," The Educationally Retarded
and Disadvantaged, Sixty-sixth Yearbook Of The National Society For The
Study Of Education, Part I, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press,
1967), p. 422.

development during the pre-school years.[2] Goldberg reported in the

1967 National Society For The Study Of Education Yearbook that:

> Negro children live in a predominantly lower-class subculture
> that is further characterized by a unique type of family structure,
> by specially circumscribed opportunities for acquiring status, by
> varying degrees of segregation from the dominant white majority,
> and above all, by a fixed and apparently immutable denigration of
> their social value, standing, and dignity as human beings because
> of their skin color.[3]

Negro children often experience educational deprivation, where

the blame can be attributed to teachers and counselors as well as social

deprivation, where the blame is attributed to their experiential back-

ground. The psychological impact of impoverishment coupled with the

"ghettoization" of the core area affect scholastic performance in that

the children suffer from: (1) a lower sense of personal worth; and,

(2) lower aspiration levels.[4] In addition, Negro children reflect

differences in their personalities and school achievement due to their

ethnic group membership over and above those related to class status.

Consequently, class and minority group membership function to alter the

content of what an individual aspires to, and thus constitutes an inter-

vening variable between personal ambition and social achievement.

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[2] Robert J. Havinghurst and Thomas E. Moorefield, "The Nature And
Needs Of The Disadvantaged," The Educationally Retarded And Disadvantaged,
Sixty-sixth Yearbook Of The National Society For The Study Of Education,
Part I, (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 12.

[3] Harry A. Passow, Miriam Goldberg, and Abraham J. Tannenbaum
(eds.), The Educationally Retarded And Disadvantaged, Sixty-sixth Year-
book Of The National Society For The Study Of Education, Part I,
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 25-6.

[4] Harry A. Passow and David L. Elliott, "Disadvantaged In Depressed
Areas," The Educationally Retarded And Disadvantaged, Sixty-sixth Year-
book Of The National Society For The Study Of Education, Part I, (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 25.

Self-Concept

The individual is shaped and developed by anticipating and
assuming the attitudes and definitions of others toward him, and is
controlled through the adoption of the attitudes, norms and values of
the community toward him. Each person is, therefore, a reflection
of the social process in which he has participated.[5] The Negro child
learns of an assigned inferior status at an early age from the
attitudes of the white community, his own black family, and peers,
who have been socialized to believe that Negroes are substandard human
beings. As a result of conditions usually found in depressed areas
such as physical and economic deterioration, family transiency and
instability, the child may develop conflicts with regard to his feelings
about himself and about the group with which he is identified. The end
product is doubt, confusion, self-hatred, a defeatist attitude and a
lowering of personal ambition.[6] In turn, these feelings of lack of
self-esteem and/or negative self-esteem are reflected in his inability
to perceive an accurate self-evaluation of his ability, which is
necessary to solve problems raised in the social and academic situations
he encounters daily.[7] In other words, the statement of expectancy
(level of aspiration) that he formulates is a basis for drawing general

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[5]Alvis Pouissaint and Carolyn Atkinson, "Negro Youth And Psycho-
logical Motivation," Journal Of Negro Education, XXXVII (Summer, 1968),
p. 241.

[6]Eunice Newton, "Bibliotherapy In The Development Of Minority
Group Self-Concept," Journal Of Negro Education, XXXVIII (Summer, 1969),
pp. 257-8.

[7]Sidney M. Jourard and Richard M. Remy, "Perceived Parental
Attitudes, The Self And Security," Journal Of Consulting Psychology,
XIX (October, 1955), p. 366.

inferences about his self-concept or self-esteem, and also an indirect indicator of tasks he will attempt and, subsequently, achieve or fail to achieve.

Parental attitudes toward the child play a significant role in implementing his self-concept because it is in the home that attitude sets toward personal growth and limitation are developed. That parents are the primary influence on the formation of a child's self-concept was succinctly stated by Schriber ". . . the mechanism through which parental influence is mediated seems to be pupil self-concept."[8] Therefore, the tendency to value or disvalue the self is correlated with parental approval or disapproval. This is an important concept because it has been shown that a favorable self-concept is the factor most highly related to higher aspiration and greater achievement.[9] This is translated to mean that when a child is well liked by himself and significant others, as a result of approved parental and positive self-evaluation, he is secure and this enables him to feel more confident that he is adequate to handle life's problems.

Through community attitudes and the institutionalized symbols of caste inferiority such as segregation (de facto or de jure), schools, neighborhoods and jobs, in addition to a more indirect negative indicator, the reactions of the child's own family, the Negro child

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[8]Daniel Schriber, "Raising Aspirations of Youth And Implications For Community Organization," Mental Health Of The Poor, ed. Frank Reissman. (London: The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), p. 9.

[9]Jourard and Remy, op. cit., p. 367.

experiences deep feelings of humiliation and rejection. The lack of positive support for the formation of a positive self-concept, in turn, causes the Negro child to become negatively esteemed.[10] This influences the child's achievement level adversely because he feels insecure, and consequently, inadequate to handle many of his problems. Subsequently, ego deflation, or the perception of the status perception of his racial group, is detrimental since it provides an all-embracing rationalization for personal shortcomings, lack of striving, and lack of achievement.[11]

Social and Educational Values

Social values are usually transmitted to the growing child by the social agencies of family, school and peer group. When the three agencies are in basic agreement as to values, they tend to reinforce one another and minimize personal or social conflict in the socialization process. On the other hand, conflict in the socialization process may develop in two ways: (1) if the agencies are in conflict with one another; (2) even if the values agree the ". . . realities of the social milieu may make the achievement of internalized values difficult or impossible for the individual to obtain."[12] In an attempt to deal with this conflict, lower- class Negroes have developed alternative values which help them adjust to their deprived circumstances.

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[10]Pouissaint and Atkinson, op. cit., p. 242.

[11]Schriber, op. cit., p. 63.

[12]Robert R. Bell, "Lower Class Negro Mothers' Aspirations For Their Children," Social Forces 43 (May, 1965), p. 494.

Dailey indicated that ". . . to the extent that social classes are subcultures (different ways of life) people in different classes judge, perceive, value, interpret and understand things quite differently.[13] This idea is reflected in the early socialization of the lower-class Negro child, who internalizes the values and develops behavior characteristics representative of the lower-status family and neighborhood in which he is reared. This, in turn, may cause conflict when he extends his activities into the larger social environment of the school and community, because he encounters many values and behavior expectations that are representative of the middle-class and quite different from those he has experienced. His family and peer group then serve to reinforce the dominant values of the lower class while the school attempts to negate the worth of many of these values and inculcate middle-class values in their place. This can lead to confusion and possible rejection of either the school or home.

Heterogeneity Within The Lower Class

When dealing with the designation lower-class as applied to a group with a common socio-economic background, there is a tendency to portray the lower-class as a monolithic whole. Thus, the wide spectrum of variability that exists within each class group and the considerable overlap between each class are often disregarded. This conceptualization of the group sharing uniform characteristics leads to stereotyping behavior and not taking individual differences into consideration.

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[13]John T. Dailey, "Education And Emergence From Poverty," Journal of Marriage And The Family, 26 (November, 1964), p. 519.

There are variables within the home environment that reflect the differences between the lower lower-class and the upper lower-class. This idea was succinctly stated:

> The specific values and attitudes associated with each socio-economic level may be assumed to result in differences in general motivation and in ways of satisfying needs that will carry over to affect learning.[14]

Bradford reported that lower-class Negroes learn the values espoused in the Protestant Ethic (the basis for the middle-class value system) from their families and that characteristics such as class level would determine the strength with which these values would be held by the child.[15] In this context, it has been found that the families of the high achievers represented a somewhat better socio-economic level accompanied by a generally more favorable psychological climate in the home. Therefore, ". . . relatively small differences in the socio-economic status within the lower-class group studied were related to school success."[16] Consequently, the closer the mother's aspirations for her children are to the lower end of the lower-class value range, the less likely her children are to be greatly influenced by other agencies and persons reflecting more middle-class values. This, in turn, indicated that the relative position of Negro mothers in the

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[14]Francis J. DiVesta, "Meaningful Learning: Motivational, Personality, Interpersonal, and Social Variables," Review of Educational Research, 31:511, (1961), p. 518.

[15]David Bradford, "The Formulation Of Achievement Attitudes Among Lower-Class Negro Youth," Dissertation Abstracts, 28:292,(July, 1967).

[16]Helen H. Davidson and Judith W. Greenberg, Traits Of School Achievers From A Deprived Background, (New York: The City College of the City University of New York, 1967), p. 135.

lower-class may be related to the different aspirational values transmitted to their children and may also contribute to a way of life which makes any alternative aspirational levels difficult for their children to internalize and possibly achieve. The families closer to the middle-class often share the same ideas and values of the middle-class, including viewing the school as a means of acquiring status, which they inculcate in their children.

Parental Influence

The quality of parental concern for the child in general, and for his education in particular, are important for school achievement in lower-class Negro children. It has been established that parents from this socio-economic group have a high regard for education, in addition to a high level of aspiration for their child's academic achievement.[17] Although this is the case, it is also true that this group represents an extremely high percentage of dropouts in the total school population. Even though the parents aspired to high goals for their children, they were not always successful in correctly interpreting the opportunities offered by the school experience, because their desires were not always translated into the workable attitudes that are a prerequisite for proper academic motivation. In other words, parents lacked the ability to convert their general strong interest in education into

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[17]S. M. Miller, "Poverty And Inequality In America: Implications For The Social Services," Mental Health Of The Poor, ed. Frank Reissman (London: The Free Press of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), p. 15.

effective support for their child in the school situation. Weiner and

Murray summarized these ideas in the following statement:

> The difficulty lies not so much in desires but rather in the
> attitudes that parents (and it often follows their children) have
> that the educational goals can be obtained. . . it is their feeling
> of "reachableness" of "within my grasp" which differentiates the
> children who are in the lower- socio-economic status from those in
> the higher social classes as far as educational aspirations are
> concerned.[18]

The home, which represents the child's disadvantaged environ-

ment, serves to restrict the range of experience that prepares the child

for the school situation, and to delimit his high expectations. At this

point, it is necessary to differentiate between plans and aspirations.

Plans indicate a realistic expectation, whereas, aspirations indicate

an idealistic expectation. This is significant because, although

Negroes ranked as high as white students on aspirational level, they

were often willing to "settle for" (but not aspire to) goals lower than

those of any other group.[19] The difference between the level of

aspiration and the level of expectation, therefore, indicated that

expectations run below aspirations. The inherent idea of limited access

to the implementation of lofty goals tends to reflect the fact that the

nature of their expectations is usually consistent with their perception

of the availability of opportunity and reward. The inability to recon-

cile the gap between expectation and aspiration is often viewed as an

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[18]Max Weiner and Walter Murray, "Another Look At The Culturally
Deprived And Their Levels Of Aspiration," Journal of Educational
Sociology, 36, No. 7, 1963, p. 320.

[19]Noel P. Gist and William S. Bennett, Jr., "Aspirations of
Negro and White Students," Social Forces, 42, October, 1963, p. 41.

insurmountable obstacle in obtaining improved status through educational achievement.[20]

Still another factor mitigating against the achievement of a higher social status is that the child's family often cannot provide a model of attitudes and behaviors that would facilitate the acceptance of the educational process. Han reported that this disjunction between being taught in principle to achieve and being allowed in reality to achieve can cause a very severe sense of deprivation in those who feel greater sensitivity to failure.[21] Thus, this could affect the Negro child in the school situation because he is exposed to high aspirational standards in the home and school, yet the home does not offer the support and models that help realize this goal in the classroom. He must then deal with the realization that his planned expectations do not measure up to his aspirational expectations and the discrepancy between the two may result in academic indifference, and/or resignation to a sense of futility and helplessness in improving his social status.

FACTORS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

School Milieu

Outside the family, the school is the most important social institution shaping the Negro child's achievement motivations and

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[20]Crandall, op. cit., p. 426.

[21]Wan Sang Han, "Discrepant Socio-Economic Status Of Aspiration And Deviation-Proneness Among High School Seniors In A Large Southern City," Dissertation Abstracts, 28:4716, May, 1968.

behaviors.[22] Within this setting, the child's academic orientations are influenced by his teachers, counselors, peers, and the general school climate. The concentration of the lower-class within the core area of the city has created ghettos that determine the population comprising the student body. This is a significant factor because the children enter school (an institution molded by middle-class educational theory and techniques) with the values, attitudes and skills acquired from their lower-class background. In addition, they return to this same environment once school is dismissed, and are in contact with values that differ from those espoused in the classroom.

Wilson found that in the predominantly lower-class schools, the middle-class students' aspirations were depressed and their academic performances were inferior to boys with comparable ability from similar families in predominantly middle-class schools.[23] On the other hand, it was reported that there is a strong relationship between the achievement of lower-class Negro pupils and the nature of the student body of the school, specifically, their achievement was higher when they were in schools with more advantaged peers.[24] This reinforces the contention that when a child is cognizant of his performance relative to others

[22]Crandall, op. cit., 432.

[23]Alan B. Wilson, "Residential Segregation Of Social Classes And Aspirations Of High School Boys," Education Of The Disadvantaged: A Book Of Readings, ed. A. H. Passow (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), p. 280.

[24]Anthony Davids and Augustus A. White, "Effects Of Success, Failure And Social Facilitation On Level Of Aspiration In Emotionally Disturbed And Normal Children," Journal of Personality, 26, March, 1958, p. 78.

in his group, there is a tendency to modify his performance in the
direction of the group mean.

Since there is a close correspondence between parental attitudes
and children's actions toward self-advancement, the attitudes generated
in the home may function to create student attitudes that devaluate or
emphasize the importance of education. Therefore, the most significant
differences between the lower and middle-class school population are
related to the different orientations in motivation toward school, their
perceptions of the purpose and meaning of the educational experience
offered by the school, and the probability of actually implementing
their academic goals.

Teacher's Influence on the Child's Self-Concept

If the school reinforces the sense of personal insignificance
and inadequacy that the child experienced in the home, there is little
hope that he will benefit from education.[25] Although the child's self-
concept is molded in the home initially, it is also true that subsequent
experiences with significant others can modify his self-concept.
Davidson and Lang reported that positive feelings about the self are
associated with good academic achievement and that the child's self-
appraisal is significantly related to his perception of his teacher's

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[25]Educational Policies Commission. Education And The Dis-
advantaged. Washington: National Education Association, 1962, p. 13.

feelings toward him.[26] In other words, the teacher, especially at the
elementary level, functions as a "substitute parent" and is very
influential in reinforcing or altering the child's self-concept, and his
perception of the school situation. Thus, adequate school functioning
is closely related to the child's feelings of self-competence, self-worth
and teacher acceptance.

The terms often used to describe this segment of the population
such as: culturally handicapped, deprived, and disadvantaged, although
referring to environmental limitations, often result in the transference
of a negative connotation to the child's learning potential. The teacher,
who represents middle-class values and expectations, must be aware of the
child's values and recognize his strengths as well as deficiencies if he
is to create an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance in which the
child can achieve. It was reported that when the child perceived the
teacher's acceptance as a positive appraisal of his worth, this
encouraged him to seek further approval in the form of further academic
achievement.[27] These interdependent behaviors reinforce one another and
enhance academic as well as personal growth. On the other hand, this
cycle may take a negative turn, and if the child does not do well in
school he will feel that the teacher has a negative perception of not
only his ability, but also his own person. This negative outlook will

[26]Helen Davidson and Gerhard Lang, "Children's Perceptions Of
Their Teachers Feelings Toward Them Related To Self-Perception, School
Achievement And Behavior," Journal Of Experimental Education, 29,
December, 1960, p. 112.

[27]Ibid.

tend to lower his efforts to achieve in school and reinforce his

negative self-concept. Pedersen stated this idea succinctly:

> . . . The teacher's evaluation of ability, as perceived by the
> student, has its impact on the student's level of aspiration. . .
> the less socially or academically advantageous the background
> characteristics of the student, the greater the impact of the per-
> ceived teacher evaluation of ability to do school work on the
> academic self-concept.[28]

Factors That Impede Teacher's Perception
Of The Child

Since it is mandatory that the teacher have an accurate per-

ception of the child, it is important to be aware of the factors that

interfere with this process. Initially, the teacher must realize that

the lower-class family does value education. In this connection it has

been found that they tend to underestimate the number of problems the

Negro child finds in the school environment and overestimate the number

of problems found in the family relationship.[29] Often teachers are

poorly trained to understand and cope with the cultural variations

present in the ghetto school. In turn, their failure to recognize or

deal effectively with this cultural difference can lead to discouraging

consequences, which can result in a partial negation of their responsi-

bility to the child by viewing the home as the cause of the child's

academic failure. As Dailey indicated, there are twin challenges for

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[28]Eigil Pedersen, "Student Characteristics And Impact Of Per-
ceived Teacher-Evaluation On The Level Of Educational Aspiration,"
Dissertation Abstracts, 27:4356, April, 1967.

[29]Douglas P. Howard, "The Needs And Problems Of Socially
Disadvantaged Children As Perceived By Student Teachers," _Exceptional_
Children, 34, January, 1968, p. 328.

the school staff to meet: (1) identifying with a subculture different from their own; and (2) relating the somewhat alien institution of the school to the neighborhood subsociety. When teachers are unable to overcome these obstacles to understanding and acceptance, they ". . . grow psychological defenses against failure, such as, rigid self-protective philosophies which project the blame onto the children, onto their race, etc."[30]

Another factor that impedes accurate perception of the student is the concept of homogeneous ability grouping, especially in the early grades. The skills that the child brings from the home are not on the same level as the skills of a child coming from a middle-class home. This general unreadiness, due to inadequate pre-school experiences, can result in initial failure in the school situation which subsequently lowers expectation and aspiration levels.

In connection with this area, Deutch found that social poverty may have a leveling effect on the achievement of individual skills and abilities. This idea of experiential deprivation affects the child because it is possible that he has developed to a proportionately lower level of his own potential than the middle-class child, who has had a richer experiential background during the same period of time.[31] This discrepancy in experience would be reflected in standardized achievement test scores (often based on appropriate experiences that children of the

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[30]Dailey, op. cit., p. 437.

[31]Martin P. Deutch, "The Disadvantaged Child And The Learning Process," Mental Health Of The Poor, ed. Frank Riessman (London: The Free Press Of Glencoe Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1964), p. 178.

same age have achieved) that are employed in determining placement in a
particular ability grouping. For example, the language of the basal
reading program is so structured that the disadvantaged child must begin
to function at the onset at a level already beyond his capabilities.[32]
Therefore, he must progress at a rate even faster than normal if he is
to keep pace with the group. Consequently, the child is often judged
as capable of achieving at that level and the teachers' expectations are
geared to anticipate achievement at that particular level. In addition,
it was reported that classes with greater ability tend to be assigned
the better teachers, even though quality teachers are more important for
the achievement of minority group pupils.[33]

If the teacher is caught in this cycle, she will play a role in
the self-fulfilling prophecy of approaching the child with set expec-
tations of behavior that elicit that exact behavior. Therefore, the
child who succeeds in school reconfirms his concept of self-worth, while
the child who started out with a slight academic deficit may become
convinced that he is a failure. When the teacher is unable to differ-
entiate between the child's growth based on progress over previous
performance, as opposed to growth based on comparisons with his peers,
she will compound the child's negative feelings and unintentionally
alienate him from the school situation. It has been found that the
teacher's disapproval of inadequate performance appears to have no
effect on aspirations or future performance, but disapproval when the

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[32]Eugene Baker, "Motivation For The Disadvantaged," Grade
Teacher, 85, March, 1968, p. 104.

[33]Davidson and Greenberg, op. cit., p. 137.

student's performance is as good as he feels he can do, has negative

effects on both the student's aspiration and future performance.[34] As

Passow and Elliott stated in their study on the effects of early failure:

> A series of interactions between underlying abilities, overt
> achievement, and individual self-confidence may take place. . .
> lower abilities producing lowered achievement, lowered achievement
> inducing diminished self-confidence, which in turn, feeds back on
> achievement, and so on. If one adds the devaluation brought on by
> race prejudice superimposed on poverty prejudice, these processes
> may be accelerated.[35]

Influences Of Success And Failure

It has been found that teachers within the school can nurture

a positive self-image through the manipulation of success or increased

competence in the child's learning experiences.[36] This sense of

increased competence is essential because it enables the student to feel

that his goals are the same as those of his teacher and that his teacher

has the ability and desire to help him obtain his goals. Yet, Grotberg

found that:

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[34]Howard Rosenfeld and Alvin Zander, "The Influences Of Teachers
On Aspirations Of Students," Journal of Educational Psychology, 52,
February, 1961, p. 10.

[35]A. Harry Passow and David Elliott, "The Disadvantaged In
Depressed Areas," The Educationally Retarded and Disadvantaged, Sixty-
sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education,
Part I, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 28.

[36]Davidson and Greenberg, op. cit., p. 121.

. . . Negro high school students see a significantly greater discrepancy between their goals and those they believe are held by their teachers, and that socioeconomically lower youth, especially Negro youth, are least likely to perceive the teacher as wanting to help them reach their goals.[37]

Consequently, the major factor influencing success in the inner-city school is the staff, which creates the overall climate of understanding and acceptance in the school. Teachers, in order to be effective, must learn to recognize the student's strengths and positive aspects on which to build as well as deficiencies for which to compensate.

As stated previously, Negroes are found to have educational and intellectual orientations as high as the white students. In this context, the student's desire for success may be viewed in terms of an approach-avoidance conflict where the attainment of success at a high level of performance and the avoidance of failure are positively reinforcing experiences. Therefore, the need for success and high attainment tends to pull up the level of aspiration and the need to avoid failure tends to pull it down.[38] This principle operates in the lower class Negro child, who formulates his level of aspiration in the form of a compromise between the probability of success and failure. Often, the child growing up in the lower-class setting may be discouraged by parents and teachers from fostering educational objectives that are thought to be unobtainable. When this is the case, the attempt to deflate aspirations so that they correspond to what are thought to be

[37]Edith H. Grotberg, "Learning Disabilities And Remediation In Disadvantaged Children," Review of Educational Research, 35, December, 1965, p. 422.

[38]Davids and White, op. cit., p. 88.

realistic expectations can be instrumental in shaping the child's
negative reaction to the school situation. In addition, the early
difficulty in mastering the basic skills required in the schools can
lead to the sense of frustration inherent in not understanding and not
succeeding, which can manifest itself in failure or defeat. When this
occurs a child's negative self-image is reinforced and the resultant
behavior will reflect the child's rebellion against the increasingly
defeating school experience.[39] It is in the school experience that the
student finds encouragement or rejection and, in turn, academic success
or failure.

When the teacher's perceptions of pupil self-concept differed
significantly from the pupil's perception of himself, it was a result
of different and often conflicting sets of expectations regarding school
behavior. This conflict may arise from the different value orientations
on the part of the student and teacher and partly explain the alienations
that exist in the inner-city schools.[40] The social class variable plays
a part in the way a child perceives his teacher's feelings toward him.
Therefore, it is urgent that the teachers be able to recognize the
significance of the feelings that they project to their students
consciously or unconsciously. The fact that negative adult reactions
provide increased expectations for success, is also indicative of the

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[39]Ibid., p. 90.

[40]Vasil M. Kerensky, "Reported Self-Concept In Relation To
Academic Achievement In An Inner-City Setting," Dissertation Abstracts,
27:2325, January, 1966.

instrumental role that teacher's feelings and attitudes play in shaping the academic expectations of the student.[41]

Howard found that teachers initially from and teaching in the lowest socio-economic neighborhoods exhibited many discrepancies between their ideas and their students' ideas, which served to negate any assumption that the degree of teacher understanding was proportional to the amount of contact the teacher had with lower-class children.[42] It is also significant that Negro teachers from lower-class backgrounds have often become part of the middle-class, and therefore, share their value orientation and have the same difficulty as white teachers when dealing with Negro students. This value clash and insensitivity to the effect of negative reactions toward the student can lead to ineffective teaching, because the staff is not aware of the actual needs of their students. When communication is blocked, the staff may fail to convince the students of their interest in helping them realize their goals, which in turn, can be interpreted as indifference by the students.

The Counselor's Role

The counselor's role is to help each child realize and develop his full potential. In the inner-city school, this process is complicated by the conflict between the values and attitudes that the child initially learns in the home and the expectations of the school staff, which often represent different value orientations. The child must

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[41]Crandall, op., cit., p. 449.

[42]Howard, op. cit., p. 332.

relate to the school situation in a positive manner in order to benefit from the academic experience, therefore, an integral part of the counselor's function is to facilitate effective communication between teachers and students and if necessary, between parents and students.

Problems Involved In Establishing
The Counseling Relationship

In order to be effective in the counseling situation, it is mandatory to establish rapport with the counselee so honest communication can be achieved. Various attitudes prevalent in both the counselor and counselee are significant because they shape the outcome of the total relationship. In the integrated school, the consideration of race is an essential determinant of counseling results since the white counselor and black student may bring different expectations to the counseling session. Vontress reported that ". . . the attitude that white is right, with the opposite correlative for Negroes, remains pervasive among Negroes in many quarters."[43] This attitude inevitably creates doubt, anxiety and fear in the student which often manifests itself in overt hostility that makes it difficult for him to evaluate and react to the counselor as an individual. Another reaction may be to view the counselor as an authority figure which also interfers with establishing rapport, an essential condition in establishing the helping relationship. In other words, the expectations on the counselee's part can serve to determine how much the counselor can accomplish or be allowed

[43]Clement E. Vontress, "Counseling Negro Adolescents," School Counselor, XV, November, 1967, p. 86.

to accomplish. When the counselor is viewed as an outsider, it is difficult for the student to conceive of him as being able to "do anything" to help him.[44]

The counselor also brings preconceived ideas to the counseling situation that interfere with an accurate perception of the student. In order to develop acceptance of the student, it is essential that the counselor understand and accept his own values, which may be interpreted by the counselee as biases. This sensitivity enables him to better understand the client and be more responsive to his client's needs. Phillips reported that the counselor's inability to establish rapport was based on the following factors: (1) the white counselor's lack of knowledge of Negro sociological and psychological pattern of behavior; (2) the white counselor's stereotyped conception of the Negro; (3) the Negro's distrust of the white which does not allow him to completely express himself; and, (4) the inability of the white counselor to determine when rapport had been established.[45] Consequently, the individuality of the person, which is the basis for understanding and acceptance in the counseling relationship is often obscured. Therefore, the primary problem is one of accurate perception on both the counselor's and counselee's part.

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[44]Ibid., p. 88.

[45]Waldo Phillips, "Counseling Negro Pupils: An Educational Dilemma," Journal Of Negro Education, 29 (Fall, 1960), p. 506.

The Role Of Guidance In The
   Inner-City School

Guidance is a process that is the responsibility of not only the guidance counselor and pupil personnel representatives, but of the entire school staff. Teachers must be aware of the importance of the feelings they express toward their students since they come in daily contact with them and mold their expectations and aspirations, more so, than the counselor. Therefore, guidance must employ the team approach if it is to deal effectively with the student's problems. Students, on the other hand, must realize that the school staff functions as an integrated whole that exists to help them implement their goals. Grande indicated that students have a ". . . fragmented, compartmentalized, perception of school guidance."[46] In addition, he found that disadvantaged students generally expressed the following ideas about the guidance program: (1) it is not essential but does have something to offer; (2) specialized guidance personnel are "outsiders" and are less able to offer guidance than regular teachers; and, (3) it generally confused students and caused them to doubt their individual judgments.[47] These views represent a negative perception of the guidance program and its ability to help them solve their problems. Yet, the counselors have positive attitudes toward the benefits derived from the program. The conflict as to inherent value of the program indicates that there is a

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[46]Peter P. Grande, "Attitudes of Counselors and Disadvantaged Students Toward School Guidance," Personnel and Guidance Journal, 46, May, 1968, p. 890.

[47]Ibid.

definite lack of communication and understanding, since the students
are not aware of the specific value of the program that is established
for their benefit. When the program suffers from these ambivalent
attitudes, it is plausible to assume that the teaching staff and student
body would be hesitant to use the counselor as a resource person.

In order to be a valuable asset to the school, the counselor
must not only understand the background (sociological and psychological)
factors influencing the inner-city child's development, but must also
be aware of his own biases and how they affect his perception and sub-
sequent relationship with the student. He must also be willing to work
with teachers, who can reinforce the gains made in counseling sessions
by working more effectively with the child in the classroom situation.
When the child perceives that he is accepted as a worthwhile person, he
will value himself more as an individual and find that the school staff
offers him the opportunity and encouragement to make his aspirations and
goals an obtainable reality.

Chapter 3

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED SCHOOL FUNCTIONING

It has been established that parents and school personnel play

an instrumental role in influencing the development of the lower-class

Negro student's self-concept and the goals that he aspires to achieve.

In an attempt to relate these findings to improved school functioning,

several suggestions were formulated that may serve to enhance the Negro

student's opportunity for encountering success in the school situation.

Initially, educators must realize that the lack of success for certain

students in the inner-city school is the result of factors inherent in

both their home backgrounds and school program. The obvious implication

is that in order to deal effectively with these students it will be

necessary to initiate cooperation among the school staff members as well

as between the school staff and parents in the community. Unless there

is some communication between the home and school, the ideals and objec-

tives taught in the school may be completely negated once the child

returns to the family unit.

Parental Education

The school staff should recognize the fact that it has strong

allies in the families of their lower-class students, who view education

as basically important for their children. Although the parents realize

the importance of education, their inability to give support to their

desires for their children to remain in school and to stress the value

of the school experience impedes their adequacy in helping their children see the benefits of education. Another factor that interferes with an accurate perception of the school situation is their own unsatisfying school experience that colors their feelings of their child's ability to actually obtain his goals. In turn, these negative attitudes can be directly transferred to their children. Therefore, the lower-class family cannot always instill in their children the same levels of understanding and expectation that the middle-class children initially bring to the school. Since these foundations are poorly established or lacking in the ghetto child, the school will have to assume greater responsibility for imparting these ideas to the students.

Yet, the school staff will not be successful in this endeavor if they attempt to function alone. Because parental behavior is a primary determiner of a child's academic performance, it is essential that this resource be cultivated and employed by the school. Educators must realize and utilize the school's influence and trained personnel in order to obtain the parents' aid in reinforcing the positive aspects of the school experience.

Although parental education falls outside the realm of the school's responsibility, innovations such as home-school groups, concerned parent groups, adult education classes, home visitations, and other personal contacts and instructional exposures would facilitate better communication and understanding of the goals of the school's educational program. In addition, interaction of this nature would elicit feedback from the community and assist the staff in evaluating their program and securing suggestions for future improvement. The

successful implementation of a program of this scope would necessitate an initial contact with all of the parents, but considering the variability of status within the lower-class, the greatest response would be from the parents whose goals are closest to the middle-class goals. Subsequently, the lower, lower-class parents, who most need to be made aware of their role in helping the school relate it's educational program to their children, may not respond to the school's initial communication. In this case, it would be necessary to seek active involvement by sending a school representative, perhaps the counselor, into the community to initiate personal contacts and explain the program in language and terms that they can understand. Although the initial investment of time and money would be costly, the long-term gains, i.e. reduction in the drop-out rate and improved academic functioning, would offer sufficient compensation.

Consequently, the school should encourage parental cooperation, and at the same time offer programs and opportunities whereby they can gain the skills for implementing their desires for their children's education. The school staff must extend their services to meet this need for parental knowledge, in order to secure reinforcement in the home for the ideals and goals their students are encouraged to aspire to and achieve in the classroom. When this type of cooperation is effected, the child will experience less conflict because the home and school will work toward the same end, encouraging and helping the child meet his life's goals.

Assumption of Responsibility

In dealing with the home-school relationship, it is mandatory that educators realize that the efforts for improving the Negro child's opportunities are not completely relegated to the school by the parents. If the school adopts such an outlook, it is inevitable that educators will lose respect for the parents and indirectly for their children, whom they are attempting to help. This type of attitude can only reinforce the negative feelings that many students have about their race and class position and further degrade their self-esteem.

The recent emphasis on black consciousness and civil rights within the Negro community is a definite attempt to bring about change in their environment through their own knowledge and efforts. By viewing black as a positive force, Negroes have gained positive reinforcement from within the black community and this has served to enhance their feelings of self-worth. It is inevitable that this recognition from the black as well as white community and sense of control (as opposed to resignation) over his environment has resulted in a more positive self-appraisal for the Negro. As Lloyd stated, "It is better that the Negro child experience conflict about his worth than be convinced that he is worthless."[1] In essence, this is what the black consciousness movement has accomplished, pride in being black, pride in the Negro race, pride reflected in the upsurge of Negro activity on the political, economic and educational fronts. These feelings have been

[1]Jean Lloyd, "Self-Image Of A Small Black," Elementary School Journal, 67: May, 1967, p. 406.

carried into the schools and educators are faced with finding the means whereby they can effectively employ these new perspectives to facilitate the acceptance of the educational process. This concept of self-help and the desire for improvement are necessary if the Negro is to assume responsibility for his own advancement and be responsive to the opportunities that are available to him.

Programs To Meet The Students' Needs

It was previously stated that the inner-city child enters school lacking many of the skills that the middle-class child possesses due to a deficiency of appropriate learning experiences in his experiential background. The Federal Government, via federal aid to education, has already initiated programs outside the traditional school setting. Project Head Start attempts to develop basic cognitive skills that are necessary for success in the school situation. Programs of this nature are also instrumental in developing within the child a more positive self-concept since the various experiences result in greater feelings of adequacy and competence. It is assumed that by meeting the child at his level of development, and then introducing appropriate educational experiences, that his experiential field will expand to a point where he will be comparable to other children of the same age. In other words, professional educators have diagnosed the problem, and have gone to the community to offer remedial and enrichment programs to the students.

On the other hand, where does the school's responsibility to the child reside as far as planning educational experiences that will enhance his academic growth? Since there is an awareness of the child's

inability to effectively handle the introductory material, rather than
introduce the child to tasks which will result in frustration or failure,
it would be more feasible to adjust the learning tasks to suit the
child's level of development. The idea of meeting the child at his level
of development and helping him to grow would maximize his opportunity to
meet educational challenges and encounter some degree of success. This
would, in turn, motivate him to strive for further success. Therefore,
the curriculum should be flexible enough to meet the needs of the
students, not merely reflect the established program that has evolved
over the years.

The implementation of a program of this nature would be difficult
because teachers would have to innovate and structure new experiences
that would make the school program more meaningful to the student.
Counselors, especially at the elementary level, would be instrumental in
helping the student equate school with the fulfillment of his future
goals. The need for counselors at this level is mandatory, because if
the counselor is viewed as a helping person from the beginning, he would
not be an "outsider" by the time the student entered the high school
setting. In addition, the counselor should introduce the ideas of
academic and vocational planning in the elementary school, rather than
wait until the eleventh or twelfth grade when many of the students have
already dropped out of school. For the guidance program to be most
effective, services must be offered continuously as the student has need
of help. In the case of the lower-class Negro child, the crucial period
includes the first years of school when he is receptive to new ideas
and not yet alienated from the school system.

Teacher Education

Although the parents of lower-class Negro children need help in relating the value of the educational experience to their children, it is also apparent that many teachers could benefit from an increased awareness of their impact on the student's aspiration and achievement level. Most teachers are members of the middle-class (this usually includes Negro teachers initially from the disadvantaged backgrounds) and share the value orientation espoused by this social class. When educators are not sensitive to the difference in values between the middle and lower-class, they tend to compare the behavior and achievement of the lower-class student against their own standards of conduct. This type of judgmental behavior obscures the social and psychological conditions inherent in the child's background and very often presents a picture of outstanding academic and social deficiencies. In addition, the teacher may unconsciously impose his middle-class values on the lower-class child. The child, in turn, views this as indifference to and/or rejection of his values and also of his personal worth. He may come to feel that the teacher, a helping person, does not respect him and, therefore, does not want to help him. If he adopts this same type of attitude toward the teacher, the inevitable result is a breakdown in communication.

The conflict in value perception concerning school related problems (i.e. behavior, work skills, etc.) indicates a need to clarify various misconceptions. The very fact that teachers perceived most of the student's problems as originating in the home, as opposed to the school, reveals a lack of understanding of their own relationships with

the child, which is essential to create teacher-student acceptance and mutual respect.

The teacher, in order to be effective, has to talk to the child in terms of his own language. If he avoids the problem of imposing his own values on the child, he can go to the other extreme and take a sympathetic, non-demanding attitude toward the student, which would be just as detrimental to student growth. For a teacher to gain the necessary insights prerequisite to a basic understanding of the inner-city child, it is necessary to have some knowledge of his community in order to comprehend what the child interacts and copes with on a daily basis. This would necessitate contacts with the family or involvement in some phase of community development.

Ideally, the various teacher's colleges have integrated into their programs experiences that expose their students to teaching situations where they encounter Negro children from the inner-city in their own neighborhood setting. One such program is the Cooperative Urban Teacher Education program (CUTE) which is federally funded. This type of exposure allows student teachers to evaluate their initial reactions, to grow in understanding, and to evaluate their potential effectiveness in this type of school setting. It is unrealistic to teach in a suburban school and expect to deal with the same type of student in the core area school. With only this inadequate experience, it is understandable that many new teachers, and this includes counselors, become frustrated and disillusioned with the profession and are unable to cope with the demands of the inner-city school. These people are often ineffective and potentially detrimental, since their reactions

toward the students are often negative and can, therefore, adversely influence their hopes for success in the school. Another benefit of exposure while in the college situation is that the students maximize the value of selecting their electives by placing an emphasis on course work that deals with the sociological and psychological factors that influence the development of the lower-class Negro child. Then these insights gained from class work can be correlated with their actual experiences teaching the children in the school.

A teacher with this type of background has the advantage of entering the classroom with a basic understanding of the children he will be working with and their developmental patterns. Although the teacher does not have to relinquish his values, his increased sensitivity to the child's needs will make him aware of the differences in perception that can interfere with two-way communication and understanding in the classroom.

Since this knowledge is vital for the teacher, the same goal can be reached by in-service training within the inner-city school. The guidance counselor, who should have a good background in this area, can perform a valuable service to the success of the overall school program by helping the teachers develop an awareness of their biases, and at the same time improve their perception of the student's situation as it actually exists. Consequently, their improved self and student understanding will enable them to accept the student as an individual worthy of respect.

Teacher Influence

The less socially or academically advantageous the student's background, the greater the impact of the teacher's evaluation of his ability to do school work. The major implication of this statement is that many of the potential drop-outs from the inner-city school would, therefore, be most responsive to some form of positive evaluation from their teachers. Yet, these are the students who seem to be caught in a cycle of failure, which reflects their negative feelings toward their teachers, who in turn, respond toward them with negative feelings and behavior. In order for a teacher to be effective, this cycle must be broken. The point of attack should originate with the teacher, who must be aware of the adverse effects of this type of behavior and, who has the capacity to reflect the feelings that would be conducive to the students' growth. This necessitates a conscious awareness of the important role his feelings toward the students play in enhancing their opportunities for improved academic functioning.

When the child enters school with a negative self-concept that has developed as a result of interactions within the family unit and neighborhood setting, it is the teacher who has the alternative of reinforcing these feelings or of attempting to modify them in a more positive direction. This is especially true of an elementary teacher, who often functions as a substitute parent. Since the student's self-appraisal is significantly related to his perception of his teacher's feelings toward him, the teacher's feelings of acceptance and approval are the key factors in enhancing his self-concept. In addition, it has been found that successful learning experiences also nurture a more

positive self-image. Therefore, if the teacher can communicate positive feelings toward his students and, at the same time, introduce some degree of academic success, it is probable that the students will be reassured of their worth and ability. In turn, they will attempt to meet the teacher's expectations and aspire to levels of increased academic achievement.

Although the idea of increased competence as a result of increased academic success is feasible, there are considerations that the teacher must be cognizant of before he can attempt to employ this technique. Essentially, the means whereby success and failure are manipulated by the educator must be handled with great skill and understanding. Since taking a chance and risking failure can be a painful experience (especially if the student has already encountered failure on numerous occasions in his academic career), the teacher must exercise great care that when opportunities for achievement are offered, they are offered with carefully planned assistance, so as to maximize the likelihood of success. This is significant because failure has a more pervasive and adverse effect on the student than does success. When an intended success effort results in failure, the student can regress and in that case, the experience would be more detrimental than beneficial. This could ultimately result in the adoption of an avoidance behavior, where the student will avoid failure by not risking success. Inherent in this false sense of security is the possibility that the student will assume an attitude of resignation or indifference that will prevent him from any further efforts to achieve.

Counselor Influence

The counselor is in a unique position to work with both the students and staff in an attempt to facilitate understanding and communication in the inner-city school. Unfortunately, the research datum indicates that the counselor's effectiveness is often limited by the same factors that impede teacher effectiveness. These include the following factors: the lack of awareness of differences in value orientation between the lower and middle class; the inadequate knowledge of Negro sociological and psychological behavior; and the subtle effect of stereotyped preconceptions on overt behavior, which are handicaps that the counselor must be cognizant of as influencing his own relationships with students. This greater sensitivity to his own values will enable him to better understand, accept and respect his students as individuals, which will facilitate the establishment of rapport in the counseling relationship. This concept of knowing how one's biases affect one's behavior is most significant in the inner-city school, because these students are most vulnerable to either positive (growth enhancing) or negative (growth inhibiting) evaluations of their ability. Therefore, when the counselor is able to create an awareness in the staff of their importance in shaping the student's self-concept and also the subsequent tasks that he will attempt to achieve, as a result of their reactions toward the student, it is assumed that this knowledge will be translated into changed behavior, which will enhance the opportunity for each student's growth.

One of the primary objectives of the counselor is to help the student relate to the school experience in a positive manner. The

student's perceptions of high aspirations and low expectations represent a gap that is often viewed as insurmountable. Unfortunately, this concept of limited access to the implementation of lofty goals is usually consistent with his perception of the availability of opportunity and reward in the community. It is in this area that the counselor can effectively function to combat the students' negative attitude by working cooperatively with the school staff to make the benefits of education realistic, something tangible for the students to identify with.

Vocational and educational planning should be introduced in the elementary school in order to expose the student to the idea of alternative goals and the knowledge that these goals are obtainable with proper training. Instead of deflating the student's aspirations to correspond to what are thought to be realistic expectations, counselors working with the staff must encourage eligible students to develop their potential by applying to colleges or trade schools. Yet, this encouragement must be substantiated by programs and opportunities that represent the actual implementation of these goals in the community setting. The counselor must work with the parents, as well as the students, to make them realize that their children can reach their goals and also to obtain encouragement for the students' goals from the family unit. Information concerning scholarships, educational loans, grants, and the possibility of part time employment to subsidize higher education should be dispensed and discussed so that students are aware of the means whereby they can realize their aspirations. This will necessitate an active involvement on the counselor's part, because the techniques

employed in presenting the information can determine how useful it will
be to the student.

Emphasis on the vocational aspect of the school guidance program
is essential because many of these students will enter the employment
market upon leaving school. The counselor in cooperation with the
teachers could deal with relevant information, such as the realities of
finding and holding a job within the context of the school program by
introducing the basic mechanics of job interviews, holding mock inter-
views, learning to write business letters, and other related topics
that the students will encounter when seeking employment. Other
valuable information would include available employment opportunities
in the local area and possibly the placement of recent graduates from
that particular school. In addition, successful Negroes representing
various professional, skilled, and unskilled occupations could be brought
to the school to acquaint the students with the type of work required in
certain occupations, and also to function as models for the students, who
can demonstrate the attitudes and behaviors necessary for advancement.
Moreover, these people will establish a link with the community and offer
reassurance that it is possible for the students to realize their aspi-
rations. It would also be beneficial to bring in former students and
let them express their views concerning the employment market and
availability and requirements for various positions. Then the students
can compare and contrast situations and draw their own conclusions. In
order to benefit most from this type of experience, it is essential that
students gain their own insights which can later be discussed with the
counselor, vocational group, or in the classroom. In other words, the

emphasis on instructional material should be reflective of the students' needs and it is the counselor's function to present the students with alternative means for seeing that it is possible to reach his goals.

Chapter 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of urban ghettoes has resulted in a large concen-
tration of lower-class Negro children in the inner-city schools. In
order to deal more effectively with these students and to enhance their
opportunities for encountering success in the school situation, it is
essential that the school staff be cognizant of and understand the
external factors that affect these students. The purpose of this report
was to ascertain the factors in the home and school environment that
influence the students' attitudes toward aspiration and achievement and
to employ that information in formulating suggestions for their improved
school functioning.

It was concluded that the attitudes of the white and black
community toward the Negro instill a feeling of rejection, which com-
bined with the physical and social conditions that exist in the ghetto,
cause him to become negatively esteemed. The lack of positive support
from the child's family resulted in a negative self-evaluation of his
worth, which in turn, colored his perception of his competence in other
areas of endeavor. This was significant because it was found that a
favorable self-concept was the factor most related to higher aspiration
and greater achievement.

Parental influence functioned to effect many aspects of the
student's aspiration and achievement level. It was found that Negro
parents valued education and held high goals for their child's academic

achievement, but often lacked the ability to convert their strong interest into effective support for the child in school. The relative position of the Negro family within the lower class was also instrumental in determining the extent to which educational aspirations were implemented, because the families closer to the middle-class shared many of their attitudes toward education and were able to give more support to the school experience. Another factor, the inability to reconcile the gap between expectation (the actual opportunities in the community) and aspiration (the hoped for opportunities in the community) was viewed as insurmountable by both parents and students.

The child entered the school, a middle-class institution, with the values, attitudes, and skills acquired from his lower-class background. It was found that teachers were in a position to modify the student's self-concept, in either a positive or negative direction, because the student's self-appraisal was significantly related to his perception of his teacher's feelings toward him. Therefore, adequate school functioning was related to the child's feelings of self-competence, self-worth, and teacher acceptance.

Teacher influence also functioned to effect many aspects of the student's aspiration and achievement level. The research indicated that the negative terms used to describe the child (e.g. disadvantaged, deprived, etc.), although referring to environmental limitations, often resulted in the transference of negative connotations to the child's learning potential. The employment of standardized intelligence and achievement tests, which do not take into consideration the difference

in experiential age between the sample population and the inner-city child, in determining homogeneous ability groupings compounds the expectation of lower achievement. Also, the student's general unreadiness, due to inadequate pre-school experiences, resulted in initial failure, which subsequently served to lower aspiration and achievement.

Since teachers are members of the middle-class and reflect that value orientation, they often judged the student in terms of their standards, which often emphasized academic deficiencies. Teachers were poorly trained to understand and cope with the cultural variations present in the inner-city school. When they were unable to overcome the obstacles to understanding and accepting the student, they grew psychological defenses against failure and projected the blame onto the student. In addition, it was found that negative adult reactions provided greater decreases in the student's expectations for success than positive adult reactions provided increased expectations for success. Yet, unconsciously, teachers adversely affect the student's self-concept by reflecting negative attitudes toward him. Although teachers have the potential to nurture a positive self-image through manipulation of successful learning experiences, it was found that many Negro youths did not perceive their teacher as wanting to help them reach their goals.

The counselor's objective, helping each student realize his full potential, was also complicated by the conflict between lower and middle-class values and attitudes. Various preconceived attitudes in both the counselor and counselee functioned to shape the outcome of the counseling relationship. The issue of race prevented both parties from viewing each

other with respect and as individuals, which is essential for estab-
lishing the counseling relationship. It was reported that the expecta-
tions on the counselee's part determined how much the counselor could
accomplish or be allowed to accomplish. The basic problem was
inaccurate perception on both the counselor's and counselee's part
that resulted in a lack of communication.

The student's negative feelings toward the guidance program
indicated a lack of communication and the need for greater counselor
awareness and sensitivity to his own values, biases and their subsequent
effect on the student. An integral part of the counselor's function was
to facilitate improved communication by working with the school staff
and the parents to help them better understand themselves, so they can
better understand and accept their students.

These findings were employed to formulate the following sug-
gestions that could enhance the opportunities for the lower-class Negro
student to encounter success in the school setting. Initially,
educators must realize that to deal effectively with these students
cooperation between staff members as well as between home and school
must be instituted. School personnel must utilize the parents' interest
in education to reinforce the positive aspects of the school program in
the home. Innovations such as parental education should be implemented
and special efforts, including personal contact, made to involve the
parents at the lower spectrum of the lower-class.

The staff cannot adopt the attitude that the students' families
have relegated their responsibility for their children to the school,
because this would result in a loss of respect for the parents and

indirectly for the students. The recent emphasis on civil rights and black consciousness within the Negro community has served as a positive factor to enhance their feelings of self-worth and pride, which has been reflected in the upsurge of activity on the political, economic and educational fronts.

The introduction of remedial and enrichment programs that attempt to compensate for the experiential differential between the lower and middle-class child was discussed. Yet, the concept of adjusting the learning tasks within the school to meet the child's level of development is a responsibility of the staff that has not been met. The curriculum should meet the student's needs and offer the potential for initial success, rather than failure.

The need for teacher education courses and in-service training that would serve to create an awareness of the influence of values, attitudes and background factors that function in both the teachers and students is essential to create teacher-student acceptance, understanding, and mutual respect. Also, teachers must be conscious of their effects on these students, who are most vulnerable to their evaluation of their ability. When attempting to manipulate opportunities for success and enhanced self-concept, it was concluded that the likelihood of success should be maximized since failure could result in further regression and the student's resignation to academic indifference.

The need for counselors at the elementary level is significant, because this is when educational and vocational planning should be introduced rather than in high school when students are considering dropping out of school. If they are able to see that they can realize

their goals within the community, the school experience will become more meaningful. The counselor is instrumental in dispensing information (e.g. scholarships, employment opportunities, etc.) in a manner that involves the students. Cooperation with teachers in helping them to learn about themselves in order to understand their students is another primary function of the counselor.

Essentially, the school staff must function as a unified whole to promote the type of programs that will enhance student development. Increased awareness of how values and attitudes function in inter-personal relationships will lead to increased understanding, acceptance, and respect. In turn, this will enhance the student's self-concept and as he encounters success in the school setting, he will aspire to higher academic achievement.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING ASPIRATION AND ACHIEVEMENT
IN LOWER-CLASS NEGRO CHILDREN

by

BARBARA ANN RUDNICKI

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The expansion of urban ghettoes has resulted in large concentrations of lower-class Negro students in the inner-city schools. The purpose of this report was to ascertain the factors in the home and school environment that influence the student's aspiration and achievement, and to formulate suggestions for improved school functioning.

Attitudes of the white and black community instill in the Negro a sense of rejection, which causes him to become negatively esteemed. This was significant because a favorable self-concept was the factor most related to higher aspiration and achievement.

Parental influence affected the child's aspiration and achievement level. Negro parents values education, but lacked the ability to convert their interest into effective support for the school experience. Moreover, the inability to reconcile the gap between expectation (actual opportunity) and aspiration (hoped for opportunity) was viewed as insurmountable by parents and students.

Teachers were in a position to positively or negatively modify the student's self-concept. The terms describing the child's environment transferred negative connotations to the child's learning potential, and coupled with the use of homogeneous ability groupings, caused teachers to expect low achievement. The value clash between middle-class teachers and lower-class students affected aspiration and achievement. Teachers judged the student by their own standards, which emphasized academic deficiencies. Since teachers were inadequately trained to cope with cultural variations in the ghetto school, when they

could not understand or accept the student, they projected the blame onto him. These negative attitudes toward the student adversely affected his self-image, and caused him to feel that teachers did not want to help him reach his goals.

The value clash interfered with the counselor's ability to establish positive counseling relationships. The race issue and pre-conceived ideas prevented the counselor and counselee from viewing each other with respect as individuals, which precludes acceptance. There-fore, counselor awareness of his values and their effect on students should precipitate behavior change.

The following suggestions were formulated to improve school functioning. Cooperation between school staff members and the home and school is essential. Therefore, innovations, such as parental education, should be implemented to help parents reinforce the school experience in the home. Since the emphasis on black consciousness has enhanced their feelings of self-worth, educators must not assume that the family has relegated their responsibility for their child to the school.

The concept of adjusting the learning tasks to meet the child's developmental level should be reflected in curriculums designed to meet student needs. Education courses and in-service training should create an awareness of values and background factors, that function in students and teachers, to facilitate teacher-student understanding. Vocational and educational planning should be introduced in the elementary school together with useful information that would enable the student to see that his goals can be realized in the community.

Essentially, the school staff must function as a unified whole to promote the type of programs that will enhance student development. Increased awareness of how values and attitudes function in inter-personal relationships will lead to increased understanding, acceptance, and respect. In turn, this will enhance the student's self-image and as he encounters success in the school situation, he will aspire to higher academic achievement.